Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
Modernizing the E-rate	)	WC Docket No. 13-184
Program for Schools and Libraries	)	

**REPLY COMMENTS BY LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
RELATED TO THE E-RATE 2.0 PUBLIC NOTICE**

I. Introduction

As the second largest school district in the nation, LAUSD enrolls more than 640,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade, across 900 schools and 187 public charter schools. The district's boundaries encompass over 720 square miles, including the city of Los Angeles as well as 31 smaller municipalities and several unincorporated areas of Southern California. "All Youth Achieving" is the mission of LAUSD. This focus is reflected in continued double-digit growth on the state Academic Performance Index (API), the upward trend in the graduation rate, progress in the pass rate on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and other academic indicators.

Support of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is one way the district intends to carry out its mission. Another priority is the district's emphasis on an individualized, interactive and information rich educational experience. In the Fall of 2013, the district embarked upon the Common Core Technology project (CCTP), a one-to-one mobile device implementation designed to provide all students with a personalized learning environment.

The CCTP is powered by technology and has required immense upgrades to existing technology systems and infrastructure - for the sole purpose of ensuring educators and students in every classroom have the tools to create learning environments designed to increase student engagement, student learning and ultimately academic success.

A. Executive Summary

LAUSD is pleased to provide reply feedback to some of the initial comments submitted during the most recent Public Notice Comment Period. We believe the K-12 educational system has the capacity to transform to meet the demands of a global economy, and E-rate is a vital program to ensure our success to meet this national imperative.

The benefits the E-Rate program has offered to Schools and libraries throughout the nation, is remarkable. In our opinion, the program has become the primary funding source for digital education in America, with more than 100,000 schools and libraries connected to the Internet. It is clear why the program has been widely hailed as a great success.

When the program was implemented in 1998, schools and libraries were just beginning to embrace and understand the long term implications of digital technologies: as a driving force for innovative teaching and learning practices. Since then, great strides have been made to make available internet access and technology resources in the classroom, which has fast become a prerequisite. However, although many districts access the Internet through a direct (i.e., broadband) connection in place of dial-up, the vast majority still view the current speeds as insufficient to meet the ever increasing demands for bandwidth.

The FCC itself recognized this issue in its 2010 E-Rate Program and Broadband Usage Survey Report[1] which showed that almost 80% of all school and library respondents said their broadband connections did not always meet their needs.

As it is with many of our colleagues throughout the states, cities and local communities across the nation, Los Angeles is experiencing firsthand the enormous implications for technologies capacity to improve educational outcomes. Increasing our student's access to information and collaboration is now considered fundamental for today's student and is particularly relevant in light of the national education reforms underway to ensure that America's students are competitive. Concurrently, if we are to compete in a global economy, public policy goals must also support our efforts in K-12 to increase the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

Other nations are making major investments in digital education. If the U.S. does not make commensurate investments, it risks falling further behind. We believe the efforts underway by the FCC to improve the E-Rate program, coupled with the national priority President Obama has established through his ConnectEd initiative, are certainly big steps in the right direction - further advancing the historical strides our nation continues to make on the path of ensuring an exemplary public education for all kids.

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[1] http://transition.fcc.gov/010511_Eratereport.pdf

LAUSD's priority is to focus on specific initiatives intended to give our kids the very best chance to succeed. The district understands that to be successful, technology MUST play a pivotal role. This is why we began a transformation of our infrastructure to prepare and equip every classroom with the foundation necessary to provide a high-quality, digitally enabled learning experience that prepares every student for the 21st century's globally competitive workforce.

Our capital investments toward this initiative--known as the Virtual Learning Complex (VLC)--represent the transformation of the district into a technology enabled learning environment, free of the confines of time or place. It promotes an active engagement of students in their studies and immediate and timely information access for their families, educators, and administrators in an anytime-anywhere learning infrastructure. The district's Information Technology Division is leveraging voter-approved Bonds and additional funding sources to make these critical investments possible.

The question we are now asking is, "How do we sustain the support of the VLC and other priority technology systems and resources after the bond initiative is completed, especially if the E-rate program, our only source of outside technology funding, no longer meets the practical needs of our students here in Southern California and across the nation?"

II. The FCC should take immediate steps to implement the full effect of an inflation adjustment to the $2.25 Billion cap.

As SECA so aptly stated in their initial comment to the recent Public Notice:

"…none of the changes that the FCC may make will be successful if the fund is not right-sized and there continues to be a huge unmet need. There is little incentive for applicants to accept [other difficult changes to the program] if the majority continue to be shut out of this important funding stream. Without adding the full inflation adjustment to the funding cap, applicants are simply negotiating against themselves by willingly accepting the defunding of services and other restrictions. We urge the FCC to adopt the full inflation adjustment from the inception of E-rate.[2]"

LAUSD wholeheartedly agrees with this suggestion. However, as we explained in detail within our September 2013 comments previously submitted, we also fully support an increase to the current cap to a minimum of $5B. We understand Chairman Wheeler's position regarding this goal. Nevertheless, it is critical to understand that the historical demand of the program over the last 18 years has clearly demonstrated the need for an increase NOW. We contend that there is a wealth of statistical experience to 'justify' a significant increase to the cap at this time.

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[2] See SECA Comments at 5

E-Rate funding levels must ensure the program's long-term financial security. This requires recognizing that connecting schools and libraries is not a one-time endeavor - Networks require continuous support to keep them running efficiently. Additionally, since connectivity is an evolving technology, the E-Rate Program's resources should evolve in a commensurate fashion.

Lower Kuskokwim School District in Bethel, AK, submitted compelling comments regarding the need for a permanent increase to the cap when their Superintendent, Jacob Jensen stated,

"The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rate's current and future success is to provide $5 billion in funding, an amount commensurate with current demand. The final proposal must include both programmatic restructuring and a permanent increase in the program's funding cap. Quite simply, an infusion of funding without programmatic restructuring is a poor investment, and programmatic restructuring without permanent, adequate funding sets the program on a path towards instability and failure."[3]. We couldn't agree more.

A final note on this subject references our visit to DC in September of 2013 to meet with Commissioner Rosenworcel - LAUSD was in complete agreement with the Commissioner regarding her thoughts about how it is apparent there is a need for a substantial increase to the annual cap (a stance documented in our Ex-Parte filing,[4]).

III. <u>Changes to the Eligible Services List ("ESL") should be phased in or out over time.</u>

LAUSD agrees with the FCC's suggestion that changes to the ESL should occur over time. However, we are not sure that we are in agreement as to the types of changes the Commission is proposing and we have some suggested 'additional' products/services that we contend will help applicants make more effective use of the resources the program will continue to support.

For example, upon further reflection of the Commission's suggestion that E-Rate support for 'legacy' voice services be phased out, we feel compelled to note that (at least) in our District, those services are considered essential for life and safety issues throughout our 800+ locations. The mere thought of having to transition those critical connections to a VoIP solution in the next 3 years is daunting, to put it mildly. Additionally, from a budgetary standpoint, LAUSD will have to absorb somewhere on the order of $12+ million dollars back into our general operating budget which will have a tectonic effect that cannot be fully quantified at this time.

Interestingly, there was an article in the Western Pennsylvania Tribune, on May 19, 2014, that spoke to this very issue. In fact, Senator Bob Casey (D-Scranton) was quoted as saying,

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[3] http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7521129092 at 1
[4] http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7520945737

"School districts across the state are struggling with already strained budgets," Casey wrote in a letter to FCC Chairman Tom [Wheeler] last week. "The FCC shouldn't increase the burden that these school districts have by eliminating an effective program that provides important services to our school districts."[5]

The article goes on to describe several E-Rate applicants across that part of the country who will ALL struggle greatly if the Commission decides to eliminate support for basic voice services in the coming years.

LAUSD would also contend that the suggested changes to the ESL related to what was previously known as "Priority Two Internal Connections" should be carefully crafted to ensure that applicants are truly able to purchase whatever technology will allow them to achieve their goals. We would like to kindly suggest that the Commission not 'pigeon-hole' one solution versus another as they re-write the ESL. We feel it is critical that the program continue to support a 'technology neutral' environment, understanding there is NEVER a one size fits all solution to a technology need.

We feel it is important the Commission consider that no single solution works in all situations and districts should have the flexibility to consider both site wireless and cellular in-building technologies. When determining their solutions, there should be some evidence of on-going capacity planning tied to examples of applications or instructional resources, along with some documentation of actual usage. This practice helps demonstrate greater management of limited dollars. This approach also meets Section 254(h) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which requires the Commission to enhance access to advanced telecommunications and information to schools and libraries "to the extent technically feasible and economically reasonable"[6].

Finally, we feel strongly that some additional products/services that are not currently eligible for support be considered during future iterations of the ESL. Technologies such as caching and optimization technologies would help applicants manage their networks more effectively AND will stretch those scarce E-Rate dollars as far as they can go by allowing the program (and its beneficiaries) to get the most bang for their buck.

IV. Changes to the Discount Matrix

LAUSD fundamentally opposes any reduction to the long established discount matrix - as it would negatively impact our continuing ability to fund critical infrastructure projects throughout the majority of our school system. What may appear to the Commission as a 'nominal' change by reducing the maximum E-Rate discount to 80%, will produce a devastating impact on our kids, particularly districts already identified as having the greatest number of students on the free

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[5] http://triblive.com/neighborhoods/yourallekiskivalley/yourallekiskivalleymore/6101840-74/district-services-subsidies#ixzz32BTIHsxu

[6] http://transition.fcc.gov/learnnet/254.html

and reduced lunch program. We believe such a change to the matrix will directly penalize schools with a higher population of students living in poverty and these districts – including LAUSD - do not have funding to offset a reduction in E-rate discounts and will be forced to reduce services to students.

V.   The Commission should consider scalability in E-Rate 2.0

LAUSD feels strongly that the Commission should consider future scalability in any decision-making associated with changes to the E-Rate program as a whole. Where this becomes somewhat challenging is in identifying what matrices ought to be utilized to identify the need for this scalability to ensure it is not overstated too far in advance of real need. It is suggested that the current requirement for an instructional tech plan be eliminated and the focus should rest on the Commission's requirement of USAC to ask simple questions such as:

- Has the applicant implemented, or are they implementing common core standards, including the requirement for online test administration?
- Has the applicant implemented a robust one-to-one computing initiative or BYOD program that requires large amounts of available bandwidth throughout the school day?
- Has the applicant been able to identify how much additional bandwidth is needed to meet the online testing requirements?

The Public Notice goes on to ask the following question:

"Should the Commission also consider prioritizing upgrades that do not increase the speed available to applicants, but dramatically reduce recurring costs following new investment (for example, by upgrading from two T3s to a single 100 Mbps metro Ethernet circuit, or to purchase WAN upgrades that allowed them to buy Internet access at a lower-priced point-of-presence)?"

LAUSD firmly agrees with this consideration and will fully support this positive programmatic change.

VI. Prioritization of Internal Connections Funding

LAUSD feels strongly that the Commission should adopt an Internal Connections funding cycle that allows access to critical infrastructure dollars in a period of no less than one time in every five years ("1-in-5"). Research has shown that most infrastructure equipment easily has a 5 to 7 year life span. Therefore, a 1-in-5 cycle should allow access for all, including a reasonable refresh schedule.

VII. Conclusion

We believe our progress as a District to innovate teaching and learning is advanced only though a shared responsibility between our faculty, students, parents, and the greater K-12 community, working cohesively with each other and Federal agencies like the FCC, to build our children's future. We are delighted to participate in such an important endeavor to improve the nation's E-Rate program.

Regards,

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